Thievery A-la-mode:

OR,

The Fatal Encouragement.

(Price Six-Pence.)

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OR THE

FatalEncouragement.

Beneath the left Ear ſo fit but a Cord,
(A Rope ſo charming a Zone is!)
The Youth in his Cart hath the Air of a Lord,
And we cry, There dies an ADONIS!

Beggar's Opera.

LONDON:

Printed for J. ROBERTS, near the *Oxford-Arms* in *Warwick-Lane*. M.DCC.XXVIII.

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3. 26.
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Thievery A-la-mode:

OR,

The Fatal Encouragement.

THE late publick Calamity of the *South-Sea*, for Ages to come, will be remember'd by this Nation. The undone Orphan mourns her loſt Hopes, her Fortune, and with it her Lover; the Father ſees his Offspring ruin'd by him who ſhould relieve their Wants; the Great Man finds himſelf compell'd to retrench his Expences, leſſen his Retinue, and Charity and Hoſpitality are Virtues he no longer is happy in the means to practiſe:

And the Gentlemen of lower Rank, ſee themſelves debaſed even beneath the Vulgar. But of all the Sufferers in this, almoſt, univerſal Infatuation, none was more to be pitied than *Millefont*, a Gentleman of an ancient Family in *Lancaſhire*; who, tho' he could not be ſaid to have the greateſt Eſtate in the County, had yet ſo good a one, that with his prudent Management, none made a better Appearance, nor did more kind and charitable Actions among his poor Neighbours. He had one Son, and two Daughters, whom he thought himſelf bleſs'd to be the Father of; ſo greatly did they improve the good Education he beſtow'd on them. Some Buſineſs unhappily calling him to *London* at the time when the People were moſt high in hopes of the *South-Sea's* Succeſs, he fell into the general Deluſion, and altogether unpractiſed in the Arts of *Change-Alley*, became the Prey of thoſe Vultures who raiſe Fortunes to themſelves on the Ruins of the Innocent. Still flatter'd with the enchanting Proſpect of a golden Flood, which ſeem'd juſt ready to flow in upon him, Acre after Acre flew, till he was rich in nothing but his Expectations. Kept up a while, and buoyed by them, he regretted not what he had done; but when the ſudden Downfall came, how dreadful was the Scene! how terrible now did Reflection glare

upon

upon him, and preſent his own and Children's Miſery in Colours too ſhocking to be long ſuſtain'd without a Deprivation of Reaſon, or of Life! When he beheld thoſe dear Pledges of his conjugal Affection, whom he had bred up with all the Accompliſhments ſuitable to their Birth, and had taken care to inſpire with the ſtricteſt Notions of Virtue, and of Honour, now about to be reduced either to the moſt ſervile Offices for Bread, or compell'd to forfeit the other: What was once his ſupremeſt Happineſs, proved now his extremeſt Curſe; he wiſh'd himſelf now Childleſs, that he might ſingly bear his load of Woe; and could ſcarce endure to look on thoſe he ſo tenderly lov'd, yet had ſo greatly wrong'd. The inward Agonies of his Mind had ſuch an effect on his Body, that it threw him into a violent Fever, which for a time deprived him of his Senſes, and took from him the Pain of Thought and of Remembrance; but they again returning ſome Hours before his Death, he call'd his unhappy Children, and after having bewail'd in terms the moſt tender and pity-moving that Tongue e'er expreſs'd, or Heart conceiv'd, the Deſtruction he had brought upon them in general, he addreſs'd himſelf to his Son, who was three Years elder than his Daughters. My dear Child, *ſaid he*, once Heir of a competent

Eſtate, now reduced to beggary by your unhappy Father's fault, however guilty I may now ſeem, remember I have been a Parent, and that in theſe my lateſt Moments I again am ſo in my Advice: Whatever Misfortunes Poverty may reduce you to, never forfeit the Character of a Man of Honour; think nothing mean but a baſe Action; do any thing you can with Honeſty for your ſupport; and if Providence be pleaſed in mercy to afford ſucceſs to your Endeavours, comfort your unhappy Siſters; ſtrengthen them in the Paths of Virtue: remember yourſelf, and remind them alſo, that nothing renders a Perſon of either Sex truly miſerable but the loſs of Honour. Obſerve their Conduct with a Father's eye; be to them what I have been to you till this laſt unfortunate Miſtake, a Parent, a Guardian, a Protector, and a faithful Friend.—For your own ſake revere my Memory, and thinking of me as I was, forget the fatal Inadvertency which in undoing you, coſt me my Life.—Long might I have continued a happy Father, had not one wretched Accident deſtroy'd that Name; and while it ruins my Poſterity, cuts ſhort my thread before my time.—I hope, as I alone am guilty, on me alone the puniſhment will fall, and Heaven will raiſe Friends to protect and guard the Innocent.

At theſe words his Voice faulter'd, he could ſpeak no more, but ſtretching out his Arms, he embraced, he kiſs'd, he bleſs'd them in their turns as well as his decaying ſtrength would permit, and expir'd; leaving them overwhelm'd in ſo deep a Sorrow for his loſs, that ſcarce their other Woes could find any place for remembrance.

The firſt violent Emotions of Grief, however, being over with the Ceremonies of his Funeral, young *Millefont* began to think ſeriouſly on his own and Siſters deplorable Condition; and being reminded by his own good Senſe, as well as by his dying Father's Remonſtrances, that where there is not an Eſtate, nay a very great one indeed, Sloth is the Parent of Indigence, he endeavour'd all he could to get into Buſineſs; but tho' no Man was more capable of it, and none had a greater number of thoſe who call'd themſelves his Friends, than his Father when in his proſperous State, yet little effect did he find of their profeſſions; a bare Civility, and that too but for a time, did he find from any of them; they at length grew cool in their Reſpects, made ſcruples to grant any little Favour he ask'd them, and were at length denied to him, when he went to their Houſes. Thoſe moſt near to him by Blood,

re-

refuſed him the leaſt aſſiſtance of their Purſe, and he thought it a very great Obligation that he obtain'd the freedom of lodging in the Houſe of one of them. But ſtill more careful of his Siſters Preſervation, he with great Entreaties got the youngeſt to be receiv'd into the Family of an Aunt, who promiſed to give her, ſhe being then but twelve Years old, an Education with her own Children: the Elder of theſe young Ladies was obliged to work Plain-work; ſevere Dependance, and wretched Suſtenance for a young Creature bred in the manner ſhe had been, and was now juſt arriv'd at that Age which gives a Perſon a true taſte of the Elegancies of Life. Yet, cruel as the Alteration was, ſhe ſuſtain'd it with a Fortitude greater than could be expected from one of her Sex and Years; few could boaſt of more perſonal Perfections, nor did her Converſation want any of thoſe Charms which are requiſite to maintain the Conqueſt which Beauty at firſt obtains. Many there were, who were the Captives of her Graces. But in theſe latter Ages of the World, it is not Merit, but Wealth, which engages that ſort of Affection that tends to Marriage: All other Demonſtrations of Love ſhe had the daily offers of. Among the number of thoſe who attempted to corrupt her Innocence under the ſhew of Tenderneſs, was a young Nobleman, whoſe Siſter

ſhe

ſhe work'd for, and coming frequently to the Houſe, had the opportunity of ſeeing her. He ſoon found out where ſhe was lodg'd, and teſtify'd the Paſſion he had for her, by offering her a Settlement of one hundred Pounds a Year, if ſhe would conſent to his Deſires: but ſhe reſiſted his Addreſſes with a contempt befitting her Birth. But he ſtill proſecuting his Suit, 'tis uncertain how far his Sollicitations might have prevail'd in Circumſtances ſuch as hers, had not her Brother, who kept the moſt wary Eye over her Behaviour, found out the danger to which ſhe was expoſed, by a Letter which ſhe had happen'd to leave careleſly on the Table, and was taken up by him one day when he came to viſit her. The Emotions with which he read it, teſtify'd his diſdain; and he in this, indeed, perform'd a Father's part, tho' it was not in his power to do ſo in any other. He talk'd largely to her on the ſcore of Reputation, bid her remember the Principles in which ſhe had been bred, her Father's laſt Exhortation, and the Miſeries which attend a vicious Courſe of Life, in terms which made her tremble. She burſt into Tears, aſſured him ſhe had never entertain'd a thought to the prejudice of her Virtue, but was compell'd to treat with Civility a Nobleman to whoſe Family ſhe had many Obligations, and on whom

ſhe

ſhe depended chiefly for Support. That is an excuſe which, *ſaid he*, will never paſs for current with an honeſt Mind: no Perſon, I believe, is by Nature ſo vile as all at once to forfeit every pretence to the Protection, or the Care of Heaven; 'tis by degrees that Vice loſes its odious Form, and I am certain, that whoever conſents to liſten to an endeavour of being ſeduced, is in great danger of being ſo in the end. Perſuaſion, or, perhaps, Force, may in time bring that about, you at preſent are moſt averſe to; and when your Ruin either way is once accompliſh'd, what will be the effect of unavailing Penitence and Remorſe, but to fill your Soul with added Agonies, and encreaſe of Tortures? I muſt have you ſee this Attempter of your Honour no more, *continued he*; whatever may be your imagin'd loſs, depend that Heaven will make it up, and doubly recompence what you ſhall ſuffer on ſo meritorious a ſcore. She aſſur'd him without any heſitation, that ſhe would obey the injunction he laid on her, and for the future refuſe admittance to his Viſits, nor receive a Letter from him. *Millefont* ſeem'd pretty well ſatisfy'd with the Promiſe ſhe had made him, at preſent; but afterwards, more ſeriouſly reflecting on the Inſinuations of his own Sex, and the Weakneſs of hers, could not content himſelf till he had made her re-

remove to another Lodging; which he took care to provide for her in a part of the Town very diſtant from that ſhe had been in before, ſtrictly charging her not only to forbear going any more to a Houſe where lived a Perſon who had ſuch powerful Temptations for her Virtue, but alſo to take all poſſible Precaution not to let any Perſon, who might inform him, know where ſhe was; aſſuring her, that if nothing offer'd to make him able to ſupport her in a better manner than ſhe at preſent was, he would condeſcend rather to beg Charity in the moſt publick and abject manner for her Subſiſtence, than ſuffer her to be expoſed to Sin and Shame for Bread. So great an Example of Honour in a Brother ſhe moſt tenderly loved, 'tis certain greatly ſerved to encourage her in the perſeverance of her own virtuous Reſolutions; and ſhe reiterated her Vows to him, that no Misfortunes ſhould excite her to an Act which ſhould forfeit the Love and Care he expreſs'd for her.

For the term of eight Years did this noble-minded Brother, and his beautiful Siſter, endure Sorrows and Difficulties, which it would fill a Volume to ſet forth in all their melancholy Circumſtances; yet were

they proof againſt all the different Temptations which fell in their way. But of how little Eſtimation, alas! is Virtue, and all the good Qualifications which can adorn Humanity, in an Age where only Intereſt is conſulted! Not all the Perfections and Lovelineſs of the female Iſſue of the unfortunate *Millefont* could acquire them Husbands, nor the manly Graces, fine Senſe, Integrity, and perfect Honour of their Brother any Poſt or Employment which could enable him to ſupport himſelf or them. The Good-nature of that Relation with whom he had till now continued, beginning to change to its reverſe, that unhappy Gentleman was every day ſubjected to Inſults which his Spirit could ill endure; and not doubting by the preſent Behaviour, that worſe would enſue, and that he ſhould ſhortly be turned out of doors a friendleſs Wanderer, he fell into a ſtate of Mind little different from deſperation. He ſaw his elder Siſter in Misfortunes which are the inevitable effects of Poverty, in want of even the moſt common Neceſſaries of Life, and denied even the hope of knowing a better State, ſo greatly had her Calamities prey'd on her nobler Faculties, wither'd her Youth, and decay'd her even to an impotence of Mind. His younger indeed, remain'd ſtill

with

with that Kinſwoman who had at firſt taken her into her Charge; but that Lady being now of a great Age, her Death was every day expected, and the beſt part of her Income dying with herſelf, there was little to be hoped from her Children, who would have barely ſufficient to ſupport themſelves in the manner they had been educated. The ſevereſt weight of Woe now lay on *Millefont*; the Apprehenſions of what he was in all probability to ſuffer himſelf, were nothing to the Anguiſh he ſuſtain'd on the account of theſe unhappy Girls, the Delicacy of their Sex rendering them leſs able to ſuſtain the Hardſhips of Want, and their Beauty filling him with continual Terrors, that ſome time or other that might betray them to a worſe Ill than Poverty.

While he was taken up with theſe diſtracting Meditations, a young Gentleman of his Acquaintance, who was alſo his Friend as far as a Bottle of Wine, or a Supper, would needs have him go with him to a whimſical Entertainment at the Play-Houſe, very much in vogue, call'd the *Beggar's Opera*. The Houſe was ſo extremely full, that tho' they went at four o'clock, they could get no Seat, but were obliged to ſtand

at the Pit-door. *Millefont*, whoſe Soul at preſent was little tun'd for ſuch Diverſions, would fain have perſuaded his Friend to go out; but the other cry'd out on his ill Taſte; ſwore that no Fatigue was too great for the Pleaſure they ſhould receive when the Actors ſhould begin; adding, that he had been a Spectator of the ſame Entertainment for two and thirty Nights, yet ſtill came to it with more than the Raptures of a firſt Enjoyment of a Miſtreſs. Their Converſation happening to be pretty loud, ſeveral Gentlemen that ſat near, join'd with him in opinion, ſaying, nothing was ever ſo agreeable; one proteſting, that he had ſeen it five and thirty times, another forty; and a third, that he had not miſs'd once the Repreſentation of it, nor would, if it laſted the whole Seaſon, which he heartily wiſh'd it might. Such prodigious Encomiums, given by Perſons who ſeem'd to be of diſtinction, and had good Senſe, made *Millefont* more patiently endure the little Eaſe of his Situation; but ſtrangely was he amaz'd, when the opening Scenes preſented only Characters, which to him ſeem'd too low to afford any Pleaſure to an elegant Taſte. He underſtood the thing, as certainly it was intended by the Author, a Satyr on the Inconſiſtencies and unnatural

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Conduct of the *Italian Operas*, which, tho' they charm the Eye with gay Dreſſes, and fine Scenes, and delight the Ear with Sound, have nothing in them either to reform the Manners, or improve the Mind, the original Inſtitution of the Stage. But he found few who thought as he did; they did not ſeem to take the Meaning of the Poet; they admir'd it for the Whim, and becauſe it made them laugh, but had not at all the worſe Opinion of thoſe Performances it was deſign'd to ridicule: And this Obſervation threw him into very ſerious Reflections on the capricious Diſpoſition of the Age.

Some few days after, paſſing by a great Picture-ſhop, he ſaw the Prints of Captain *Macheath* and *Polly Peachum* hanging in the Windows with thoſe of the firſt Quality of both Sexes in the Kingdom. And the ſame Evening happening to be at a Place where ſeveral Ladies were viſiting, he obſerved that every one of them had the agreeable Highway-man and his two Doxies painted on their Fans and Snuff-boxes. What, *ſaid he to himſelf*, is it become an emulative piece of Gentility to encourage the vileſt Characters that Nature will bear? How many worthy Parts has Mr. *Walker* ap-

appear'd in on the Stage? How many great Heroes have ſeem'd to live again in the Repreſentation of Mr. *Booth* and Mr. *Wilks*? But the Applauſe they receiv'd for them was almoſt as ſhort-liv'd as the Performance! The Morals of the *Patriot*, and the graceful Geſture, and fine Utterance of the *Actor*, were alike remember'd! In various Scenes Mr. *Walker* has appear'd in the moſt advantageous Colours, and tho' he *merited*, never could arrive at the Honours he now enjoys. ——Is it then to the moſt low, vicious, and depraved Character he owes his Fame?—— Moſt certainly! elſe he had not ſo long been neglected.——Degenerate Age! when only Crimes, and thoſe too of a nature which none but the meaneſt and moſt wretched part of the Creation can ſubmit to be guilty of, ſhall be immortaliz'd in Paint and Verſe.

Thus did he reaſon with himſelf; and coming out of his Soliloquy, could not forbear expreſſing aloud ſome part of his Sentiments; but he was preſently ſilenced, over-born by a torrent of Praiſes almoſt as abſurd as the Theme they were upon. The general Voice was againſt him, and he durſt not inſiſt on the Subject, for fear of being ac-

accounted a Perſon entirely devoted to his own Opinion.

In fine, he could go into no Company, hear no Diſcourſe, but what was taken up with the charming Characters of Captain *Macheath* and *Polly Peachum*. Surprize, they ſay, wears off, and the moſt prodigious Events, when become frequent, ceaſe to excite wonder; yet could not his diminiſh at ſo aſtoniſhing a Proof of the Stupidity, to give it no worſe a Name, of the Town. Good God! cry'd he, as often as any Teſtimonies of this nature reach'd his Ears, of what uſe are now the great Examples drawn from the Heroes of Antiquity, or the more lively Inſtances of the preſent Worthies? The god-like Virtues of *Tamerlane* no more excite Applauſe! *Belliſarius* mourns in vain, and the Lover of his Country, *Cato*, is forgot! The Conqueſts of our fifth *Henry!* the Piety of the ſixth! and Valour of the fam'd *Black Prince!* are Subjects too dull for the modiſh Converſation of theſe Times. The Cant of *Newgate*, and that ſort of Behaviour which ſome Malefactors are guilty of, even when under Condemnation, and was accuſtom'd to be ſo ſhocking to a thinking Soul, when any account happen'd to be given of it by the

the *Ordinary*, is now a Matter of Mirth, and charms the *Britiſh* Genius more than *Shakeſpear*, or than *Otway* ever could.

But tho' he was not of a Diſpoſition to be biaſs'd by the Caprice of others againſt his own Reaſon, and had by Nature and Education the utmoſt abhorrence for any thing that tended to the Encouragement of Vice; yet being driven to the utmoſt Deſpair by the Unkindneſs of his Friends, and the little regard he found paid to Virtue, he at laſt form'd a Reſolution to have recourſe to what he moſt hated, ſince his Inclinations and Perſeverance in following the other, afforded him no Relief. In this deſpairing Humour, he provided himſelf of a good Horſe and Piſtols, and ſet up for Captain *Macheath*'s Profeſſion; in which he had great Succeſs, the firſt day preſenting him with a Booty of above two hundred Pounds, beſides leaving the Perſon from whom he took it, ſufficient to bear his Charges to his Journey's end. The next, he met an old Change-Broker, who he knew to be one of thoſe who had aſſiſted in the Ruin of his Father; from him he got fifty Pounds: but ſoon after encountring a poor *Scotch* Pedlar, who had been robb'd by two Foot-pads of his Pack and

Money, the Value of which, he ſaid, was above forty Pounds; the generous *Millefont* made up his loſs out of the Broker's Stock.

He had not follow'd the Road above a Week before his Courage and good Fortune made him the Maſter of a thouſand Pounds, the moſt part of which he lodg'd in the Bank for the Uſe of his Siſters, who, amazed at this ſudden Change in his Fortune, were very inquiſitive into the Cauſe; but he refuſed acquainting them, fearing the knowledge of ſucceſsful Vice might taint their Virtue, and encourage them alſo to Actions not warrantable.

Many various Adventures he met with in his new Profeſſion in a ſmall ſpace of time; but they being only ſuch as may ordinarily happen to Perſons who travel on the account he did, I ſhall paſs them over in ſilence, leſt my Reader ſhould imagine I deſign to imitate what I have condemn'd, and would entertain him with the Tricks and Dialect of a common Thief. I ſhall therefore only particularize one Occurrence, which I think remarkable enough to employ the Pen of a better Writer than myſelf.

Happening to be ſtroll'd farther into the Country than he had been accuſtom'd, he heard at a ſmall diſtance a Hunting-Horn and a Pack of Dogs. That being a Diverſion he was extremely fond of, he ſtop'd his Horſe a while to liſten to it; but was ſoon rouz'd from that Amuſement by the appearance of a Gentleman and a Lady, who ſeem'd by their Dreſſes to be Hunters, but had quitted the Company for a Game they liked better. On the firſt noiſe of their Horſes, he withdrew behind a Thicket, where, diſmounting, he conceal'd himſelf the better to obſerve them. The Place they were in being the Entrance of a Wood, he ſaw the Gentleman alight, and having help'd the Lady to do ſo too, he tied the two Horſes by the Bridles to an Oak, and taking his fair Partner by the Hand, led her farther into the ſhady Receſs.

Millefont perceiving this, faſten'd his own Horſe, and making what haſte he could after them, overtook them juſt as they were about to ſit down on a fine graſſy Bank at the foot of a Tree. The noiſe of ſomebody near, made them turn haſtily about, ſurpriz'd beyond meaſure at the ſight of a Man in a place where they had imagin'd them-

themſelves entirely without danger of Interruption of any kind whatſoever; but were infinitely more ſo, as well as frighted, when *Millefont*, preſenting his Piſtol, bid them deliver what they had of Value. The Gentleman was altogether unprovided of means of reſiſtance, and therefore deſiring him not to fright the Lady, was preparing to pluck out his Watch and Money, making an excuſe that he had but little, it being Pleaſure only that had drawn him out that day. While he was doing this, *Millefont* had time to examine his Face, thinking at firſt, that he had ſeen him before, tho' where, he could not preſently recollect; but the Tone of his Voice aſſiſting the Idea his Features had given him, he now remember'd this was one of thoſe Gentlemen he had ſeen at the Play-Houſe, and heard burſt out into ſuch extravagant Encomiums on the *Beggar's Opera*. It came preſently into his Head to retort upon him in a merry way; which he did in theſe words. This, Sir, *ſaid he*, is but the Sequel of the *Beggar's Opera*; and I hope no Gentleman will be offended at the *Reality*, who was delighted with the *Repreſentation*. 'Tis, methinks, a charitable Conſideration of the Town, that ſince the *South-Sea*, Bubbles, and other publick Calamities have made ſo

many Beggars, this way of being ſupply'd by the Pockets of the more fortunate ſhould be encouraged. To take a Purſe by Violence or Stratagem from thoſe not inclin'd to beſtow it, was, indeed, in former unfaſhionable Times, thought ſcandalous; and not all the Bravery, nor Generoſity of *Hind*, ———, or the *Golden Farmer*, could gain them any better Titles than Rogue, and Thief. But now, thanks to the *Beggar's Opera*, 'tis become an agreeable and a laudable Employment, engaging to the Men, and charming to the Women; and a young Fellow need not doubt but by it to raiſe his Fortune from the one, and his Pleaſures from the other.

Theſe Satirical Reflections, 'tis probable, vex'd the Gentleman no leſs than the loſs of his Money, but he made no anſwer, neither liking the Remonſtrance, nor the Company of the Perſon who made it; and therefore immediately held out his Purſe and Watch. But our accompliſh'd Thief would by no means accept the latter, telling him, that ſince *Jonathan Wild* was unfortunately taken off, and none as yet had thought fit to aſſume the Character of *Peachum*, the *Macheaths* had no way to vend thoſe ſort of Commodities with ſafety,

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and therefore dealt all in Specie. On which the Gentleman put it up, well enough pleaſed with this part of his Irony, tho' he was not with the other.

What paſs'd afterwards between the Lovers, and whether they proſecuted the deſign on which they came to that Wood, or not, is not at all material to the Hiſtory of *Millefont*. I ſhall therefore take my leave of them, and attend this unfortunate Gentleman till he came to a Croſs-Road, where, meeting a Perſon well mounted and alone; he encounter'd him with the uſual Form, *Stand, and deliver*. But this happen'd to be one who, having a great quantity of Gold about him, was not ſo eaſily to be prevail'd with to reſign it. He preſented his Piſtol to *Millefont* at the ſame time he did his, and with more ſucceſs; for while the other miſs'd his Mark, he lodg'd a Bullet in the upper part of *Millefont*'s left Arm, who, feeling himſelf wounded, and equally agitated by Revenge as Intereſt, was about to try the other Piſtol, when the Servant of the Gentleman he attack'd, having ſtay'd behind on ſome occaſion, came galloping towards them. *Millefont* now found it as vain as dangerous to engage with both, and clapping Spurs to his Horſe, avoided their purſuit

with all the diligence he was Maſter of. The many Croſs-Roads he took, obliged him to go ſo far out of his way, that it was late before he reach'd *London*; where, being come to his Lodgings, a Surgeon was ſent for; he pretending he had got the Wound by an Encounter with a Highway-man, who had attempted to rob him. None ſuſpected the Truth of what he ſaid, nor in the leaſt imagin'd he had ſuffer'd his Principles to be ſo far corrupted, as to have got his Hurt by any means that were not warrantable: And perhaps he might have proſecuted the vile Profeſſion he had taken up, for a long time, without any body's ſuppoſing him to be guilty of it, till grown more bold and hardy in it, he had attack'd ſome Perſons as reſolute as himſelf, and been taken and brought to the Bar an Example of publick Juſtice. But Heaven, in compaſſion to thoſe virtuous Principles, which had ſtood the Teſt of ſo many Temptations, and at laſt yielded but to the moſt poignant Neceſſity, was pleaſed to ſpare that Shame, and take him off while high in the good opinion of the World.

His Wound being ſearched, it was found to be of ſuch a nature, that the Surgeon deſpair'd of making a Cure of him; and tho'

he

he did not in plain words tell him the worſt, yet the Patient eaſily perceiv'd what his Thoughts were, by his Looks, and the private Whiſpers he obſerved between him and the Perſons preſent at the Operation: on which he preſſingly deſired they would let him know the certainty; adding, that if it were true that he muſt die, he had much to do before his departure; and to leave any part of what he had to ſay undeclared, would make him leave the World in Agonies ſuch as they would repent to have inflicted. Theſe Adjurations made the Surgeon, tho' unwillingly, let him know, that there was ſcarce a probability of his Life; but aſſured him, that he ſhould be a better judge the next day, when he ſhould come to open his Wound.

Millefont reſted ſatisfied with this Promiſe, and waited the reſult; which happening, as he before imagin'd, a poſitive Sentence of Death, he deſir'd a Clergyman of the Church of *England* might be ſent for, to whom he confeſs'd, in the preſence of thoſe who attended him in his Illneſs, the Crimes he had of late been guilty of, and the Incitements he had to encourage him to take up the Profeſſion of a Robber, concluding with a hearty Prayer, that he might be

be the only Perſon ſeduced by the extravagant Applauſe the Town gave the Character of a Thief in the *Beggar's Opera*.

He had ſcarce ended this declaration, when his Siſter came into the Room, having notice of his Hurt; but not appriz'd of the Danger, imagin'd ſhe brought him news which would go a great way toward the haſtning his Recovery. And before ſhe could be told the truth of his Condition, began to relate, how a Gentleman of above fifteen hundred Pounds a Year, being dead without any Heir, had left his whole Eſtate to *Millefont*, who was of the ſame Name.

O Heaven! thou art juſt (*cry'd he*, as ſoon as ſhe had finiſh'd her Narration:) How great a Reward was preparing for me, had I perſever'd in Innocence! but when I had renounced thoſe Principles to which my Youth was bred, how unfit was it I ſhould reap the Benefit of thy gracious Decree! How wretched does he deſerve to be, who cannot truſt the Power that made him, for Support!

Theſe Expreſſions throwing the young Lady into the utmoſt Conſternation, ſhe was by the Standers-by inform'd of all her Brother

ther had juſt before reveal'd, together with the impoſſibility he could out-live that Night. The Grief, which Tidings ſo unexpected and alarming threw her into, may eaſily be conceiv'd by what has been already ſaid of the tender Affection between them. I ſhall therefore forbear troubling my Reader with any Repetition of what ſhe ſaid, they being only ſuch things as were natural to her Love and Virtue.

Millefont endeavoured to moderate her Affliction, conjur'd her always to preſerve her Innocence; and, as an Atonement for his own Guilt, order'd that ſtrict Enquiry ſhould be made after the Perſons whom he had robb'd, and all he had taken reſtored with double Intereſt: And after allotting five hundred Pounds *per Annum* to be paid out of the Eſtate lately left him, for charitable Uſes, divided the Remainder between his two Siſters. He liv'd not many Hours after he had ſign'd his Teſtament, which time he devoted wholly to Prayer and Meditation; mingling with Entreaties of Forgiveneſs for his own Sins, the moſt fervent Supplications, that Heaven would be pleaſed to reſtore the *Britiſh* Genius to ſome degree of its former Vigour, and that no more unhappy *Millefonts* might be debauched from

 their

their firſt Principles by the Encouragement given to the depraved and vicious Characters which compoſe the *Beggar's Opera*.

How far his Devotions will ſucceed, is yet uncertain; for the Town ſeems ſtill to languiſh under the ſame Diſeaſe, and for any thing that can be gather'd from the Symptoms, will not ſoon be cured. We are apt indeed to flatter ourſelves with ſome little hope from the following Account; *viz.* That ſome Gentlemen, fam'd for a ſuperiority of Wit, to prove themſelves ſuch, laid a conſiderable Wager, that whatever they undertook to eſpouſe, ſhould pleaſe the World *nemine contradicente*, as long as they ſhould countenance it by their preſence. The Agreement was, that it ſhould be ſomething which had in it not the leaſt ſhadow of intrinſick Merit. The *Beggar's Opera* being at that time *à propos* on the ſtocks, that was pitch'd on for the deciſion, and accordingly was by the Wagerers cry'd up and extoll'd.

If this be fact, theſe Gentlemen have certainly the double Pleaſure of winning the Stake, and at the ſame time knowing themſelves the Arbitrators and Judges of Wit, even in a Cauſe where their Cenſure muſt

muſt be againſt Wit. But I rather fear this is an Excuſe which ſome ingenious Lovers of their Country have invented, to ſcreen the reigning Folly of the Times, and make that paſs for a Deſign, which is in reality a Depravity of Nature, and a Deficiency of that Spirit which formerly encouraged the Muſes Growth, and the Promotion of Learning and of Virtue.

F I N I S.

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